To / Mrs Price
with the Respects of
the Author

A

# SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

MURRAY STREET CHURCH, NEW-YORK,

IN BEHALF OF THE

## United Foreign Missionary Society.

MAY 11th, 1823.

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By Ph. M. WHELPLEY,
Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in the city of New-York.

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no 1.

TO THE HONOURABLE

STEPHEN VAN RENSSELAER,

PRESIDENT OF THE

UNITED FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

This Sermon,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

New-York, June 4, 1823.

no 1

# SERMON.

ACTS, xxvi. 19.

"WHEREUPON, O KING AGRIPPA, I WAS NOT DISOBEDIENT UNTO THE HEAVENLY VISION."

THIS declaration is the amount of Paul's defence before Agrippa. Though we have often dwelt upon the story of his arraignment with intense interest, we cannot now recur to it but with a deeper sentiment of admiration; for we see something of moral sublimity in character—something of power and brightness in the truth of God that had escaped us before, and the whole scene still grows upon the imagination, and fills the heart.

If, my hearers, you are affected as I am by this narrative, you at once imagine yourselves in the throng that filled the judgment hall of Festus, at Cæsarea. The seat, where Felix had presided, is occupied by Agrippa and Bernice, supported by Festus, "in great pomp, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city;" they are surrounded by an armed soldiery; many chief priests and scribes from Jerusalem appear as accusers and witnesses; and the courts of the hall are filled by a wayward, furious multitude, wrought up and ready to sanction to blood and to death any decision of the representatives of Cæsar.

In the midst of this audience there stands a man in bonds, mean of stature but mighty in spirit, Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. It is that Saul of Tarsus—the accomplished zealot—the strict and blameless Pharisee—the prime minister of the Sanhedrim, who but a short time before left the feet of Gamaliel, resolved in the pride of learning and

power, that the religion of the Galilean should speedily follow its author to the cross and to the tomb. His known character as a relentless persecutor of the Christians, his miraculous conversion while in the heat of prosecuting his commission against them, his fortitude and zeal and self sacrificing virtue in obeying his call to the ministry, and the testimony of Jesus contrasted with the dark and determined bigotry that surrounds him, his heaven inspired greatness—for the Spirit of his risen LORD dwelt in him richly—single him out as the only object of interest in that great assemblage: and every eye instinctively fastens upon him, while Agrippa says, "Paul, thou art permitted to speak for thyself." It is a small privilege, yielded more by curiosity than by a sense of justice, and yet it is all the privilege that he, or that any ambassador of the cross needs, liberty to speak and for his theme "Christ and him crucified." He stretches forth his hand and answers for himself. In the simplicity of a confession, he tells his story—a story, so full of conscious rectitude, that it puts to shame the cavillings of Festus, and dashes the rhetoric of Tertullus, and makes one feel as if there were no ignominy in his chain, and no authority in Agrippa's tribunal;—a story, so full of the mighty mastery of truth and feeling, that it compels the proud minion of Cæsar himself to exclaim, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!"

He narrates the *occasion* of the surprising change in his character and conduct, that had subjected him to public hatred and bonds and the peril of his life.—vs. 13, 15. "Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests, at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.—And I said, who art

thou, Lord?—And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

The *design* also of this glorious vision he states, not as an inference of his own, but in the language of Christ himself —language which he could not forget, as it contained his call to the apostleship and his commission to the Gentiles.—vs. 16—18. "Rise and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me."

And lastly, he speaks in brief of *the influence* which this revelation had upon him—vs. 19, 20. *Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:* but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

It is my object, Christian Brethren, to make the *occasion*, the *design*, and the *effect* of Paul's conversion, as stated by himself, the basis of some remarks upon the *duty of Christians relative to the missionary cause*. Through me, instead of an abler advocate, The United Foreign Missionary Society address you. They are willing to place themselves at the bar of your judgment, and, like Paul, with your permission, tell their story. It is plain and persuasive, because it is true. They wish to tell you, how they too have been arrested in their opposition to the cause of Christ, and what a glorious vision of the reigning Saviour they have seen:—they wish to tell you of the high and

holy commission they have received, to turn to the heathen and impart to them the gospel of the grace of God:—they wish to tell you, too, that they have "*not been disobedient to the heavenly vision*," but have showed, and are still labouring to show to the heathen of the present day, "that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." And they think themselves happy in appealing to you, because they have confidence in God and their cause, and are sure that your Christian charities will yield them higher favour, than was wrung from the half-believing Agrippa.

Speaking in the name of the Society, I shall not now attempt to reason you into a sense of duty or the adoption of principles hitherto rejected, because I take it for granted that you think the heathen, that is, all who are destitute of the light of the gospel ought, if possible, to be converted and saved. I can only aim at the impression of just views, and the excitement of benevolent feelings, not doubting the existence of a sympathy, strong enough to bear me through. I was ashamed when reflecting how timidly—how cautiously—with what attempt at insinuation and address I proposed to gain your good will and patronage; for I thought how he, who stood before Agrippa's bar, would have pleaded the cause of the heathen;—and I thought too, that I should have the master-spirit of Paul, and an inspiration of speech, that would unloose all your senses, and make you realize the awful condition of many families, tribes, and nations, that are living and dying without God and without hope,—and make you see the privations and self-denying virtue of those little bands of Missionaries, who are now far away among the heathen—and make you hear the imploring cry, that comes up from the region and shadow of death,—and make you feel, as Christians ought to feel, the mandate of the ascending Saviour, "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature!"—But I am no longer ashamed, or fearful, or desponding,

because, "though Paul plant and Apollos water, it is God who giveth the increase."

I. We observe, in the first place, the *occasion of Paul's conversion was a miraculous vision of Christ in his glory.* It was, doubtless, in the highest sense, a *miracle.* And it seemed requisite, that there should be a miracle in the case, in order that he might be an Apostle in the first degree, having, like the eleven, seen the Saviour in his heavenly glories and from his own lips received his commission: as he says, "last of all, Jesus was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." It was requisite too, in order that he might receive his particular designation as an apostle to the Gentiles; for he was a Jew, and retained all his natural predilection for his own nation; and the vision of Peter had not yet occurred, and it was not yet understood by the apostles themselves, that the partition wall was broken down, and that "unto the Gentiles also GOD had granted repentance unto life:" and we know how distinctly this designation was made, not only from what GOD said to Ananias, "he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name unto the Gentiles," but from his own assertion, "unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ:" and it was requisite, likewise, that he should not only see the Saviour in person, but, like the other apostles, be inspired, and clothed with miraculous powers;—in order that they might form a visible and indissoluble link between the Saviour himself, and those who should succeed to their office and labours in after generations;—in order that the gospel might begin its progress and win its first triumphs under the visible agency of its author, as that was best calculated to set aside the ritual of the Jew, and prostrate the idols of the Gentile;—in order that the first apostles might be visibly and most eminently qualified to select and commission their successors of the

next and the latest posterity in the mighty work of evangelizing the world.

So far, a miracle, and extraordinary gifts were necessary. But something more was requisite, without which the miracle would not have distinguished him from that prophet who "loved the wages of unrighteousness." Saul must be *converted*—his heart must be changed—he must himself "turn to God and do works meet for repentance." There is a secret history here—a miracle in the moral world—in which the angels in the presence of God believe and rejoice, though men are incredulous; and of which the outward circumstances of his conversion were but the visible signs. A light more spiritual and powerful than that which shone around him broke into his soul; the ruling passion of his mind is suddenly changed; the proud, relentless, self-righteous, persecuting sinner, becomes at once an humble, subdued, penitent, believing, devoted Christian:—to his quickened faith, the vision of the risen, reigning Saviour is more glorious than that even which overcame his bodily senses; and in that faith, he would now recall his breath of threatening and slaughter, and repair, if possible, the injuries he had done to the name of Jesus,—and cries with the first emotions of a renewed and thankful penitent, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The matter of deepest importance in the case then,—that which gave Paul the prime quality of an Apostle, was not the miraculous vision, or any extraordinary gifts, but *piety*—his conversion to the faith of Christ. Balaam also saw a "heavenly vision;" he went on a mission by divine command from the Euphrates to the Jordan,—and while the language of inspiration was on his lips, he blessed the armies of Israel; but "treason, stratagem and spoil" were in his heart until he fell beneath the sword of Joshua. And what was it, aside from the different occasions of their calling, and the diversities of gifts that marked their ministry, that distinguished all the apostles and disciples of the Sa-

viour? It was simply their conversion to God—their love to Jesus Christ and to the souls of their dying fellow-men. And whether such conversion were occasioned by the simple command, "follow me," as in the case of Matthew and Peter; or by some token of Omniscience, as when Zaccheus and Nathaniel were called; or by some proof of Almightiness, in stilling the tempest or raising the dead; or by some "heavenly vision," like that of Tabor, or of Patmos, or that which caught the senses and the spirit of Saul on the way to Damascus, the leading fact was the same in all. And what was it, but *a change* of heart and views and purposes—nothing more nor less than what constitutes a real Christian?—a change, that is wrought in the inner man by the Spirit of God, and that must pass upon every approved disciple of Jesus, whether he be among those, to whom the spirits of the earth and air are subject, or those whose only joy is, that their "names are written in heaven."

And now, my hearers, I am ready to state the first general principle suggested, in relation to the duty of Christians towards the Heathen world. It is this. *A man needs but to be converted to* God—*to be a Christian in heart, in order to become an efficient agent—a "worker together with Christ" in the conversion of the world.* You can easily imagine—would to God, the imagination were oftener a reality!—how if you were inspired, as Paul was, and clothed with miraculous powers,—and had seen a vision of the risen Saviour, calling you to the service, that you also would obey it, and not only give your property and influence, but would yourselves become missionaries of the cross. Such is the triumph, too often, of matter over mind—the superior efficacy of sensible objects to act upon the affections and purposes of men. Is it so then?—that the gospel is still and always to be propagated by a miracle, or that every agent of its progress must see a heavenly vision?—Is it right that we indulge the temper of the stiff-necked and unbelieving Jews, who were for ever asking for "a sign?"

Are the grounds of Christian duty towards the heathen so identified with extraordinary gifts and the movements of a special Providence, as to cease to exist when these fail?—Or must we throw back upon the fishermen of Galilee the blame, that the generations of a thousand years have died without hope?

We say, no;—for two reasons among many others; *first*, because the grounds of Christian duty in the case have no necessary connexion with supernatural agencies, it only requiring that a man be converted,—no matter by what means, common or special,—in order to make him an efficient in the great cause. It was not till Paul's heart was changed, and filled with the love of Christ, and affected by the moral condition of the Heathen world, that he understood the call and felt the obligation of devoting himself to their salvation. It was so with all his coadjutors, and with all, who through subsequent ages have laboured successfully in this cause. And it is so *now*. For, aside from the influence of public sympathy and passion, which will patronise an object to-day and persecute it to-morrow, because it comes to be the fashion, we do not expect men to be the devoted friends of the missionary cause, who have not themselves been "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto GOD." They may indeed give, as they often do, from sympathetic pity or ostentation, or some movements of conscience, or from an idea of nobleness in the act that is full of praise and self-satisfaction; and what they give so far promotes the great object. But it is not to those, who "build GOD a church, and laugh his word to scorn"—to those who see the light of truth and yet remain unsubdued by its power, that we—that the Saviour, looks to show forth his praise and carry his name to the Gentiles. "Lovest thou me?"—is the question which divides and selects the individuals, who are called to this work; and they are the individuals, who can say, as Peter,

"Lord—thou knowest all things—thou knowest that I love thee."

"The kingdom of God cometh not by observation:" and it is therefore of the last importance, that in a day of much excitement on religious subjects, without as well as within the church, Christians as well as Christian Ministers should understand and vindicate the principles which move them. Of so many of you, then, my hearers, as areChristians indeed—as love the Lord Jesus, and the world of souls he came to save, I have no doubt of your aid in this cause, at home and abroad; and for the sole and sufficient reason, that like Paul, you have been converted. But of those, who are not Christians indeed, I am prepared to expect, that you will be doubtful of the propriety and success of missionary exertions;—or oppose them with more or less violence; —or under some plea withhold your aid—or give for reputation's sake, rather than for the love of Jesus Christ; and for the sole and sufficient reason, that you have not been converted, and see not your own moral necessities, much less those of a "world that lieth in wickedness."

The *second* reason why we must not look for the grounds of Christian duty in supernatural events, is that *in place of miracles*, and whatever marked the apostolic age, we have many things, which are not only the occasions of conversion, but on that account form the leading incitements to duty.

We have for instance, *the command of the risen Saviour*, perpetually binding upon all who have been converted to him,—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:" a command that must still rest upon every Christian, whether he be an officer or member of the church—for diversities of gifts or offices do not change the nature of the obligation;—a command that binds every Christian of every age, because he is a Christian, to go himself, or do all in his power to send the gospel to every

creature—for it could not possibly be obeyed to the full by the primitive Christians in thirty years, with all the aid of miracles and inspiration;—a command, that if it involve the plain duty of praying for the salvation of the Heathen, must surely embrace all other means of accomplishing it;—a command that is attended with this animating promise,—and to whom is such a promise given, if not to those in whom the spirit of Christ dwells,—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?"

It is granted, perhaps, that this is the duty of ministers, who, as the successors of Christ and his apostles, are called and qualified for this labour. But who are ministers? and how are they called, and qualified, and sent? Their grand characteristic is, that they are converted men; and they are called and qualified and sent, not by miracle, but by the same providence and grace that appoint to every Christian his place and labour in the household of faith. "How shall the Gentiles believe in him of whom they have not heard?"—thus the apostle himself reasoned—"And how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" *Sent?*" by whom? By you, Christians, who, because you have the same love of Christ, will send them, as the churches of Macedonia sent Paul and Titus; as the churches of Britain sent Buchanan and Martyn; and as our forefathers sent Brainerd and Elliot. Oh, why should it be in vain, because Christians cannot find in their own conversion to God a sufficient argument to labour for the salvation of their fellow-men--why should it be in vain, that in the saving power of his cross, with all nations and ages before him, as he ascended up on high, the blessed Redeemer said to his disciples, "go and evangelize the world?"

Besides the command, which is as binding upon every Christian as it was upon Paul, we have *the influence of those already converted, aiding the general efficacy of the truth.* It is, no doubt, a grand principle of the Christian economy,

that the influence and efforts of those already converted, should supply the place of miraculous gifts. And it is a beautiful illustration of the fact, that moral causes, differing from physical, which proceed in a gainless regularity of sequence, are always producing effects superior to themselves, which in their turn becoming causes, go on to spread the same influence immeasurably wide. Paul is converted by a miracle; but being converted, and devoting himself to the cause of Christ, by his influence and the simple exhibition of the truth on its own evidence, hundreds,—yea, thousands, are converted without a miracle. But the conversion of every individual, in whatever sphere of life, brings him under the same obligation to become himself a centre of influence for the conversion of other hundreds—other thousands. And in this way, my hearers, the world is to be converted.

Now, I ask every one, do you, taking it for granted that you are a Christian, feel no obligation to exert your influence in the salvation of men?—and there is no one but occupies a wider circle of influence, acting in a thousand ways, than he is aware. Is it so, that a beam of heavenly light has fallen upon your soul, there to be quenched and lost, and not to be reflected? It is an anomaly in the moral kingdom: for either the love of Christ will constrain you to show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, or it will be more than probable that you do not love his cause, and cannot be a christian. In this city there are a hundred ministers, and several thousand professors of Christ! Oh, who can measure their responsibility—who can tell their separate or combined influence, reaching to eternal ages, in retarding the progress of truth, or adding gems to the Redeemer's crown!

Moreover, in place of miracles, we have *the signs of the times*, which are almost miraculous. The very influence just mentioned, is put forth upon a large and rapidly ex-

tending scale; the agencies of Providence are in accordance with the subduing power of the gospel; the prophecies are fulfilled; the Spirit is poured out from on high; the chaos of nations is moved from its very depths, and in every direction light is thrown out upon its dark atmosphere; the heralds of God's mercy are following in the track of the tempest that has so lately swept the fairest portions of the earth; and there is a dawning of that day, so long prophesied of and prayed for, when the "earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters fill the sea."

In such a day of wonders, does a Christian need a miracle to convince him of duty? When he looks over the territories of the prince of darkness, so vast, so full of immortal beings, and so accessible, can he be content that the kingdom of Christ should not pass beyond its present boundaries? Or does he forget, that it was the condition of the Redeemer's sacrifice, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance?"

May I not say, indeed, we also see a "*heavenly vision?*" Not with the eye of sense, as Paul did, but with the eye of faith, do we not see the LORD Jesus reigning in glory? —demanding the services of those who belong to his kingdom, in order that he may have "the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession?"—Could we but look far upward and abroad into the spiritual world, and see how every thing above and below the sun, is preparing for the coming of his kingdom, we should no longer be among those who "set themselves against the LORD and his anointed." And I am ready to say, my hearers, that if you are still unconverted, and even breathing out threatenings against the cause of Christ, one such view of the Saviour in his glory would be enough to arrest your opposition, and make you cry with the astonished, prostrate, believing Saul. "LORD, what wilt thou have me to do?"

II. We observe, in the second place, that *the grand design of Paul's conversion was the salvation of the Gentiles.* According to the common standard of Christian feeling, his own salvation, or his call to the apostolate, might be thought an object of sufficient magnitude, not only to signalize his conversion, but exclusively engage all his powers. According to the only true standard, however, the standard which Paul himself gives, the design of his mission was the conversion of the Gentiles, and his own salvation became as it were identified with the salvation of the world. "I have appeared unto thee *for this purpose*," said the Saviour, "to make thee a minister and witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me."

In view of this fact, we cannot hesitate to assert,—and it is the second general principle touching the duty of Christians in the missionary cause,—that it is the *design* of every man's conversion, not only that his own soul, but that others—all to whom he can extend the influence of the gospel, should be saved. And if this be true of individuals as such, much more is it true of the Church in its collective capacity. The grand relation, in which the primitive Church stood to the rest of mankind, Jew and Gentile, was, as the Saviour himself said, that they were the "salt of the earth"—"the light of the world." And, brethren, has that relation ceased? Have the responsibilities of the Church passed away with the age of miracles?—Or has the condition of the Heathen world become less deplorable, because Christians have less feeling?

Let a Christian realize for a moment the grandeur of his privilege as a citizen of Zion—as a member of that Church,

which is not now, as formerly "a little flock," persecuted and driven and slaughtered,—but "a great multitude, which no man can number," and consider what relation he bears to the rest of mankind. Let him ask himself—if Paul was converted, not merely or chiefly that his own soul might be saved, but that he might become a witness for Christ, and a minister of salvation to his brother the Jew and his neighbour the Gentile, what reason have I to think that my conversion—if indeed I am a disciple of Jesus—contemplates any different design? If, when the whole number of Christians was scarcely enough to fill an upper chamber at Jerusalem, they were bound and pledged to the mighty enterprise of enlightening and saving the world, what must be the responsibilities of the Church now, when she counts some millions of her sons and holds no longer a retiring and defensive attitude, but stands upon a rock of strength and bids defiance to "the gates of hell?"—And what must be my responsibility as a Christian, thus fortified by numbers, and success, and the favour of the Highest? Should I not infer, that, in "turning me from darkness to light," God has other and higher purposes to answer, than my own salvation? that he means to gather glory to himself by making me in some way instrumental in saving the souls of men?—But what purposes *can* my conversion answer?—one may ask. What can I do in thus glorifying God?—Look at the actual state of the Heathen world, brethren, and then to the throne of the reigning Saviour, and the same reply will come to you that Paul had when he asked, "what wilt thou have me to do?"

And you need not go far to find specimens of the Heathen world. Wherever you find men, that do not obey the gospel in heart and in life, there you find *Gentiles*—Heathen—idolaters, in the worst sense of the term—enemies to God by wicked works, and therefore the proper subjects of your influence. You may begin your survey from the threshold of this sanctuary, and pass through the

heart and the suburbs of this city, where are multitudes of Heathen; thence through our partially settled territory, where you will find immense tracts, that are a wilderness or a desolation, and inhabited by tens and hundreds of thousands;—you may extend your search and wander through the great valley of the Missisippi, and trace up the Missouri to its spring-head in the Rocky Mountains; thence you may go down to the shore of the Pacific, and south to the capital of the Incas, and through the whole breadth of South America;—you may traverse the deserts of Africa from the Gambia to the Nile, and the populous regions of Asia, from Suez to Japan, and visit all the islands of every zone;—and what will be the result?—Over all this globe, you will find *Heathen*, those who need to be turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they"—as well as you, my brethren,—"may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in Jesus." They are of every name—of every complexion—of every language—of every temperament:—and they practise every form of idolatry, from the most refined to the most degraded:—and they are in number from five to six hundred millions of souls! But they are all alike in darkness, and under the power of Satan, and can never be saved, except through faith in Jesus Christ;—a mighty congregation of immortal beings, living in alienation from God, and dying the death eternal!

And now, brethren, let us recall the thought, that the leading design of our conversion and of our high privilege as members of the Church of Christ is, that we may be instrumental in some way of converting tens—hundreds—myriads of this immense multitude of lost sinners. That gospel, which presents the only rational or possible way of salvation for the children of Adam,—whose provisions know no limit but the necessities of the whole human family,—whose heaven-born charity admits no respect of per-

sons or country, of complexion or character:—that gospel, the want of which renders the state of the Heathen so wretched and hopeless, and without which, administered in its meliorating and sanctifying power, neither they, nor we, can ever see the kingdom of God:—*that gospel is ours to bestow.* We are made its depositaries and we have been brought under its saving influence, *in order* that we might become the almoners of heaven, in making that gospel "the power and the wisdom of God" to the salvation of the world.

I am aware, that the true reason why many, who call themselves Christians, are so indifferent, not to say adverse to the missionary cause, is an impression that the Heathen abroad—to say nothing of those at home in our cities and towns, may after all be saved without the gospel. Though it might confer some civil and social advantages, many imagine their eternal state to be safe enough without it: for surely God will not condemn them for not believing in a Saviour "of whom they have never heard;" and it is thought a fair inference from this position, that they may as well *never* hear of a Saviour,—or at least, that nothing more is necessary than must take place in the natural course of knowledge and civilization. And do you really think so?—and think too, that you know what the regenerating and saving power of the gospel is?—It is no mystery, that unconverted men should reason thus, for they do in fact need the redeeming influence of the gospel, as much as the Heathen. —But do you think so, Christian brethren? Would it have been as well for your immortal, as well as temporal interests, had your fathers and you been left in the same darkness, and instead of worshipping and "knowing him, whom to know is life eternal," been this day celebrating some of the horrible rites of Thor or of Woden?—Would the salvation of men have been equally certain, had the darkness, that covered the Saviour's last agonies, been continued?—or had the apostles, and the reformers, and the mighty

champions of the cross, from age to age extinguished their light, sealed up the glorious gospel of the blessed GOD, and left the world to the blackness of darkness?

The truth is, brethren, the grand design of the gospel is, through the agency of its converts,—and you hope that you are of the number,—to enlighten and redeem the world. This is your calling, your duty, your glory, to send the gospel to those, who are "perishing for lack of vision."

I now give you a nearer view of what this design contemplates, in saying, *they must be converted*—their souls must be saved. Such, brethren, is the moral state of the Heathen, that they must perish, unless they can receive remission of sins, "through faith in Jesus Christ." Of the Heathen, who live under the light of the gospel, this is fearfully true, for—as our LORD says—without that remission they must perish under a deep condemnation, because they sin against greater light and privilege. And it is equally true of the Heathen far away, who never heard the name of Christ.—They *must perish*, if we do not send them the gospel. If I did not believe this, I should esteem it a mockery indeed—a prostitution of speech and of reason, on an occasion like this, to stand up and plead their cause;—for if there be any other way in which they can be saved than "through faith that is in Jesus Christ," I should at once dismiss my fears for you, my hearers, and care little—very little, whether my own soul passed into its eternal state from amidst the gloom of Paganism or from the bosom of Christianity.

I repeat it therefore;—the Heathen must perish, if we do not send them the gospel. Not because they disbelieve in a Saviour, of whom they have not heard, but—as the Apostle argues fully in the first three chapters of his Epistle to the Romans—because they are sinners, and under the impulse of a depraved nature, misimprove the light they have. Being "a law unto themselves, and their consciences also

bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or else excusing one another," they are always "guilty before GOD." And this is the fact, that creates the necessity that lies upon us, as well as upon the Heathen, if saved at all, to be saved "through faith that is in Jesus." Why did the Son of GOD so sanction the missionary cause, as to lay aside for a season his uncreated glories, and come to us with the message of his love, and attest it by the sacrifice of Calvary? And why did he, by miraculous visions, and the spirit of inspiration, and supernatural powers, qualify others to attest the same, if those, who have never heard of Christ, or do not believe in him, stand an equal chance of salvation with those who expect to be saved by the virtue of his atonement?—And why are we taught so clearly in the oracles of GOD, that if the Heathen are "without excuse," for abusing their feeble light, our condemnation, if we reject the mercies of that atonement, will be proportionably severe?—that our place in the chambers of hell will be, like that of Capernium, as much darker than theirs, as the sun-light of GOD's righteousness is brighter than that of heathenism?

Here then, brethren, lies the grand reason why we should send the gospel to the Heathen. They perish, as we should do, without it:—we have it, and have been converted for the purpose:—*shall we not therefore send it?*—Look over the Heathen world. See what moral death and desolation reigns! No star of Bethlehem leads them:—no "day-spring from on high" visits them:—the throne of the prince of darkness is there:—thousands and millions are still his slaves:—generation after generation pour down the stream of time, and rush over the verge into eternity's vast abyss!—Look at those tribes, which roam in our western wilderness. Are they not immortal? Has not the inspiration of the Almighty given them understanding? Have they not, like ourselves, souls that will be for ever vigorous and active—that no length of existence can waste—that no labour can exhaust—that no guilt or suffering or death can destroy? And

shall we not, O Christians, labour for the salvation of beings that can never die?—Look over the scattered settlements and destitute regions of our land. Are they not our brethren? Was not their father and mother ours? Does not their blood flow in our veins? Did they not go from us but a little while since? Shall we then, when they lift the supplicating voice, when they cry to us, as they now do, to pity their distresses—to send them the consolations of religion and of life—to have compassion upon the souls of their children—to teach them how to live for immortality, shall we be deaf to their appeal? and not to theirs only, but to the voice from heaven, which says, "since it is well with you, think of your brethren?"

Besides their salvation, which is the alpha and the omega of this argument, the *civil and social condition of the heathen is to be meliorated.* Though a less, it is yet an important object.

Whatever the panegyrists of Attic politeness and of Roman honour may say, it is yet true, that without the light of revelation, no people or nation under heaven has ever been civilized; and we may readily believe, that without it no nation can ever be truly civilized. Well may we compare our state of society with that of the western Indians, for example, and attribute the amazing difference to the meliorating power of the religion of Jesus Christ. Now, to gratify the wildness of his temper and gain his sustenance, the savage roams from the cabin to the river, and from the river to the mountain. We would teach him to build a house and cultivate his fields. Now, it is his highest ambition to kill his enemy in battle and drink his blood, or to deprecate the wrath of the Great Spirit by abominable rites. We would teach him to love his enemies, and to worship his God in spirit and in truth. Now, he passes through life without any solid comfort, and dies without any rational hope, and awakes in a world of deepest darkness. We would teach him to appreciate the blessedness and comforts

of existence;—would sustain his dying hour with the consolations of piety; and by the grace of the gospel, enable him to say in view of a happy immortality, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

It is no longer a problem, whether christianity has power to "civilize, when it is allowed to develope the energies by which it sanctifies; or whether it would inconceivably meliorate the condition of man. Who doubts it?" exclaims Mr. Hall—"its universal prevalence, not in name but in reality, will convert this world into a paradise; but it is only, (we know,) while it is permitted to prepare its inhabitants for a better. But let christianity be urged to forget her celestial origin and destiny—to forget that she 'came from God and returns to God;' and whether she is employed by the artful and enterprising, as the instrument of establishing a spiritual empire over mankind, or by the philanthropist, as the means of promoting civilization merely, she resents the foul indignity, claps her wings and is gone, leaving nothing but a base and sanctimonious hypocrisy in her room."* And this is the reason, brethren, why you hear some, who have been among them, and taught them every thing but genuine religion, say of the western Indians, that they cannot be civilized, and of the Indians of Asia, that they cannot be christianized.

Christianity—and all those who feel its power will acknowledge and obey the divine vocation—looks at no less an object than the elevation of the whole human race to that height of knowledge and virtue, which as moral and immortal beings they ought to occupy. And what may satisfy the moralist and the statesman, who plan for the social and civil benefits of this life, ought not—cannot satisfy the Christian, who is born to higher labours, and whose scheme of philanthropy embraces the redemption of the soul, and the glorious destinies of an endless being.

* Hall's Charge to Carey, Missionary to India.

III. I would remark, once more, that *the effect or consequence of Paul's conversion was obedience.* No sooner did he become a believer in Jesus, than he "shewed first to them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." He engaged in evangelizing the Gentiles with a zeal, which no labours or sufferings could overcome, which dangers and death could not intimidate. Syria, Arabia, Judea, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy were successively the scenes of his efforts. The import of his mission and the grandeur of his destiny were ever before him; the gains and the glories of the world were dross in his eye; his life he counted not dear, if he might "finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus." Over wide regions of darkness, and idolatry, he scattered the light of the gospel.—In Damascus, and Jerusalem, and Corinth, and Athens, and "the eternal city," he vindicated the truth of the declaration, "*I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.*"

Such was the effect of Paul's conversion upon his subsequent conduct. And the remark I would make in view of it, embracing the third general principle I proposed to state respecting Christian duty is, that *the influence of conversion is always to fill the soul with the benevolent spirit of the gospel, and make Christians feel, not only for their own, but for the necessities of all mankind, and of course dispose them to promote the missionary cause.* If the two general principles already stated, be true,—that a man needs but to be *converted*, in order to become, under God, a coefficient in the salvation of others;—and that the *design* of his conversion is, that he may become such an instrument of promoting the cause of Christ, then it is true, that the *effect* of conversion will be a disposition to promote, in every way possible, the missionary cause.

What is the great law of benevolence, if it bind us not to regard the interests of our brethren of the human race no less than our own? And if it condemn one, who "seeth his brother needing this world's goods and shutteth up his bowels of compassion towards him," how will it regard one, who can look with indifference upon a world, ruined by sin, under the curse of GOD, and going by thousands and by millions, without the knowledge and mercy of a Saviour to eternal retributions?—What pledges can a Christian have for his own safety in the privilege and hopes of the gospel, if no generous sentiment glow in his breast, to send that gospel to the heathen; if, instead of giving his own person to the cause, he will even say, to those who are willing to make the sacrifice, "go, be ye warmed and filled!"

The spirit of the gospel is not exclusive. Its tendency is to equal and universal happiness; it is perfectly adapted to the state and necessities of men, and its object is, that all, Heathen, Mahometan, Jew, and Christian, "may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified, by faith that is in Christ." Why, then, as if we were the disciples of Judaism, or some strange superstition, do we indulge a partial and exclusive feeling, and think it enough, that we have the blessings of the gospel?

I need not say, how often this selfish, exclusive spirit betrays itself in objections to efforts in the missionary cause. "We have heathen enough in the midst of us—thousands in this city;—and must we leave our churches and home—must we neglect our own citizens and neighbours to send the gospel to those who are far off, whose language we do not understand, and whose social and civil habits it is next to impossible to overcome?"—We answer this objection in the language of the Saviour on another occasion, "these things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." We ought not to neglect (as we have done, to a degree of criminality that should make professing Chris-

tians hide their heads in shame and confusion,) the heathen in the midst of us. Neither ought we to neglect the thousands and millions far away. Did the Apostles remain in Jerusalem, or confine their labours to Judea,—as well they might for the same reason,—till their own nation were evangelized?—No! they not only laboured in Jerusalem and Judea, but they went from province to province; they traversed the Gentile world, and made it their object to plant the gospel in every nation. And is it not a fact within our own knowledge, that efforts to spread the gospel abroad invariably kindle a purer and more ardent zeal to establish it at home?—Believe it, brethren, the nature of religion is such, that the more you impart of it to others, the more you have left to appreciate and enjoy. "Cast your bread upon the waters and it shall return unto thee after many days." Where is thy philanthropy, friend of Jesus Christ? Dost thou possess the benevolent spirit of the Saviour, and canst thou look unmoved upon the final destiny of millions, that perish for need of that gospel, which it is in your power to give?

When I think of the little that has been done—how feebly the true spirit of the gospel has shewed itself in efforts to save mankind, I am ashamed and confounded. Oh, my brethren, is it not enough that for fifteen centuries, Christianity has been truly a retiring, suffering, afflicted child of heaven, pursuing her invisible way through fear and silence, and courted only to be despised and forsaken?—Is it not enough that for fifteen centuries, Christianity has been visibly the proud and selfish mistress of one-fifth of the globe, and has done nothing but multiply the trappings of her greatness, and gild the chains of her despotism, and array herself in many robes, and diadems, and sceptres, as it were in very mockery of Him, whose crown was of thorns, and whose sceptre was a reed?

Consider, for a moment, how gloriously Paul illustrated the benevolent spirit of the gospel; and I would fain try the

force of *his example, and of those who have been like him,* in exciting your efforts in the missionary cause. I would tell you how they lived, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth; —how they expected to be despised by the world, and were prepared for it by the consciousness of noble effort, and the commanding evidence of things unseen. I would tell you, how "in the light of Immanuel's cross, they beheld poverty and riches—ease and torture—honour and reproach—life and death, with a placid spirit; and how the great world and all that it contains, shrunk to a point of vanity, as before the dying lustre of his eye, who once wept over its sins and miseries. I would tell you how they traversed kingdoms; and how the pomps and vanities—the riches and honours—the science and philosophy—the arts and arms —the princes and the gods of the world fell prostrate before the triumphant march of the gospel of Jesus!"

They were "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."— They engaged with as much resolution and promptitude, as if the world's redemption depended upon their individual exertions. Feeling the grandeur, and the spirituality of their calling, they would not be chargeable with the perdition of those miserable Gentiles, to whom they might communicate the "gospel of the grace of GOD." They went from city to city—from nation to nation; they scattered themselves throughout the known world: in every village—in every capital converts were multiplied; till in a comparatively short period, the daughter of Zion, who sat weeping at the tomb of Joseph, afflicted and forsaken, was seen ascending the throne of the Cæsars, in the midst of bowing sceptres and worshipping millions.

Was it not the same spirit, that actuated the men, who began and carried forward the ever memorable Reformation? Of Huss and Jerome—of Wickliffe and Luther—of Zuingli and Knox? Read the story of their labours and privations—of their zeal and perseverence—of their patience and self sacrifices—of their success and martyrdom,

and you will see in them the rising, resistless force of the same spirit, that actuated the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

And is it not the same spirit that has moved the later missionaries of the cross?—those who within a few years have explored vast regions of Asia—visited many dominions of Africa—and penetrated far into the wilds of America? Oh, if you would know the genius of evangelism, go visit the tombs of Swartz and Vanderkemp, and Martyn, and Brainard, and Elliot, and a host beside. The light, which they bore, still burns with increasing brightness in the regions where they laboured, and sheds a glorious lustre upon the places of their last repose. You will find their monuments far off towards the setting of the sun, where the savage of the wilderness roams:—you will find them on Ethiopia's arid plains, where GOD is only seen in the sirocco or the sun:—you will find them where the noble Ganges rolls his tide through a world of idolators:—you will find them where the pale crescent still gleams over a land of cruelty and death!

Is there no inspiration in such examples? Consider, dear brethren, that it was owing to the labours of such men, that our fathers were "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto GOD:"—that had it not been for their sacrifices and perseverance, notwithstanding all the gilding and refinements of art and philosophy, we should now be grovelling in the pollutions, and dying under the curses of a damning superstition! And when we remember those witnesses for the truth—those angels of mercy, who gave to our fathers the sacred oracles, and bade them live; and then look abroad upon the nations, that still sit in the "shadow of death," does not our heart burn within us, to imitate their godlike example, and send this boon of heaven to the Heathen?

But there is an appeal of another sort, which I am persuaded will require more hardihood to gainsay or resist.

than you possess. It is the appeal of those, who rise up in the midst of us—and I have no doubt there are some in this assembly who have it in their heart, and who are trembling with desire to do it—who rise up and say, "we have seen the Saviour, and we will "*not be disobedient to the heavenly vision*; we love him—we love the souls of our fellow-men—we have wept in secret places over the miseries and death of the Heathen—we are willing to bid adieu to country and kindred—to friends and home—*send us away!*" And what will you say to such an appeal? Rather what have you said?—for I remember the agony of feeling that was recently produced by the presence of certain little bands of missionaries on their way to the Heathen:—how your tears bade them adieu, and your prayers followed them! You said to them, "*go!*—and in the bosom of the howling wilderness, plant the glorious cross!" They have gone—they are there—they have planted the cross, and some of them now lie sleeping at its feet! But, brethren, have you forgotten them? do you not know that they are in want? that they need your present aid? and will you let them suffer, while they are labouring to impart the rich mercies—the redeeming efficacy of the gospel to the tenants of the wilderness!

Pardon me, my hearers, for it is no wandering of my fancy—we also see "*a heavenly vision!*"—a vision more real, than that which entranced the soul of the prophet, as he sat in his lonely tower, and cried, "watchman, what of the night?"—a vision, sublime and beautiful, like that which caught the eye of the exile of Patmos, "an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel in his hand!" A scene of realities is before us, full of the energy and zeal of ancient evangelism; full of the power and glory of the reigning Saviour, and managed by a Providence, all whose secret springs and visible machinery are in his hand. The nations are agitated by new principles and new powers, that are working out the civil liber-

ties of men, and "turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto GOD." A new era in the world's history is begun!—We see Christians of all denominations, obedient to some deep and common impulse, uniting in plans for the spread of the gospel, wide as the exigencies of nations, and with an amazing force of intellect and action. After ages of indifference, of which we are ashamed to think, we are suddenly called to exertion; the selfish schemes and habitudes of life are forgotten in high adventures, that may extend the empire and glory of Christ; —and interest in the great cause, aside from prejudices and party feelings, is becoming not only the grand proof of piety, but the tie of brotherhood throughout Christendom!

It is indeed a "*heavenly vision!*" I thought so, when a few days since, I stood in an assembly of some thousands of poor children, gathered out of the highways and hedges of this city, and heard their happy voices singing praises to GOD! I thought so, when with an immense throng of Christians of every name, I listened to the operations of the American Bible Society, and heard there a man from the southern hemisphere—a Catholic patriot, pleading against the cruelties of his mother church, and beseeching for the Bible, to heal the wounds of his bleeding country, and emancipate her children! I thought so, when a few hours before, in the presence of the United Foreign Missionary Society, I heard the claims of 200,000 souls, inhabiting the unbroken forests that cover half a continent, and listened to the cry, that has come to us over the mountains, from the very shore of the Pacific—when I heard one of their missionaries, in the fervour of an evangelist, appealing to the sympathies, the prayers, the charities of Christians;— when I saw two little Indian children, baptised into the faith of my Saviour by the waters of the far-off western sky, and silently pleading the cause of their parents and kindred;—when I saw the "war club," that had so lately

been warmed in blood, sent by one of the princes of the forest, as an offering to the Prince of Peace—Oh, it was "a heavenly vision!"—And does it not now seem like the sunrise of that day of glory, when the mysterious blessing of the gospel shall have reached the most distant and desolate places of human abode;—when the world, revived, emancipated, shall be dressed in the order and beauty of a new creation, because her curse is removed—her sufferings are past—and her blood is washed away!—Is not the hour at hand, when the arch of God's redeeming covenant shall encircle the bright heavens, and all nations rejoice beneath it!